



The Beatles Rare & Unseen

MVD Visual

Most unauthorized retrospectives of pop music are overly academic and usually a bit cynical – consisting of revisionist perspectives from people who weren't there “at the time.” With the exception of a couple of music professors and “social historians,” what sets this 90-minute DVD apart is that nearly all of the interviewees were fans or part of the inner circle when the Beatles hit the scene.

With the exception of a 1975 interview that John Lennon did for French television (the only Beatle who speaks here), all of the interviews were conducted specifically for this project – from their early publicist, Tony Barrow, to Gerry Marsden of Gerry & The Pacemakers

to boyhood friend and crew member Tony Bramwell.

Some interviews are enlightening, such as Colin Hanton, drummer in the Quarrymen, Lennon's pre-Beatles skiffle group; the band's first manager in Liverpool, Allan Williams, who booked them to play Hamburg, Germany (what he calls “their school”); and Norman Smith, who engineered their first LP, *Please, Please Me*, whose 13 songs were cut in one all-day session. As he says, “To be absolutely honest, the Beatles didn't really need any producing; they knew exactly what they were going to do.”

Other interviewees merit inclusion for their sheer enthusiasm. Len Goodman (best known as a judge on TV's “Dancing With The Stars”) gushes about hearing the single of “Please, Please Me” for the first time. Early promoter Sam Leach declares of their pre-mania days, “They were the best rock band on the planet at that very time.”

Still photographs, the band's own home movies, and other film (including the earliest-known footage of the group, in Liverpool, February '62) illuminate the story to the point that you hardly

notice that none of their actual songs are included – it's instead Beatles-like backing music.

There's color footage of the band's January '64 Paris concerts (just prior to invading America), taken by Mickey Jones, drummer with Trini Lopez, on the same bill.

Another drummer, Phil Collins, was a fan and subsequent extra in *A Hard Day's Night*. "It's hard to explain to people that didn't grow up in the '60s what it was like. But when you were there, it was quite extraordinary," he states, before adding, "I judge every band and every song by that standard."

As Smith, who later produced Pink Floyd, correctly reminds, "Suddenly, England had become the number-one producer of hit records... due solely to the Beatles."

And there's more accuracy than arrogance in Lennon's comment that songs like "Hey Jude" and "Eleanor Rigby" aren't "of an era" and will sound current 100 years from now. – **Dan Forte**